

Washington, DC - Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today asked Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack whether he would support or oppose a “cow tax,” or similar fee on natural livestock emissions. Vilsack testified before the House Agriculture Committee this afternoon during a hearing on climate change legislation.

“As climate change issues are debated, the consideration of a tax on natural livestock emissions is unreasonable and peculiar,” Fortenberry said. “It is important that top Administration officials make clear their intentions regarding such regulations.”

Secretary Vilsack responded to Fortenberry's question by saying he is “not supportive” of a cow tax and doesn't expect such a tax to be imposed. In a document released last summer, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had identified regulating livestock emissions as an option in addressing greenhouse gas concerns. In response, Fortenberry earlier this year introduced legislation that would prevent taxation of livestock gas emissions.

“On the climate change front, it is clear that we must fully integrate conservation, new technologies, and a variety of renewable sources into our energy strategy, and sound agricultural practices can play a critical role in good land stewardship,” Fortenberry said.

The Fortenberry bill would protect agricultural producers from livestock emissions fines or fees proposed by any federal agency. Livestock is Nebraska's top industry, and the state is one of the largest beef producers in the nation. One in every five steaks and hamburgers is produced in Nebraska.

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